

## The Michigan "Press On Regardless"

By Suzanne Royce

(with much assistance from Detroit Region archives)

As I sat down at the computer to work out what I was going to write about this month, I suddenly remembered that Gene Henderson and his merry band were in the final stages (pun not really intended) in putting on the 50th running of the POR. With that in mind, I thought it might be interesting to find out a little about the running of the first POR Rally.

In September, 1949, George Gaston, then Regional Executive of the Detroit Region, sent an open letter to the members of the Sports Car Club of America inviting them to participate in an overnight trial. This trial was to be run on Saturday and Sunday, the 22nd and 23rd October, 1949, and was called the "Michigan Press On Regardless". Mr. Gaston emphasised that this was not a race, but rather a driving skill and navigating contest over Michigan roads. The first and third stages would be time and direction runs (much like our TSD rallies of today). However, on the second stage each contestant would be given a map of the course which would include all pertinent data, and the trick was to follow the course at a predetermined average speed.

The rally was open "to members of the S.C.C.A., and their ladies." The two classes were Sports and Touring. Sports included all sports cars registered with SCCA (and national office was very picky about what might be legitimately called a sportscar). Touring included just about any other four wheeled, self-propelled velocipede that was drivable but did not fit the former category. A two-tiered scoring system was developed giving preference to the Sports cars, "so that anyone revelling

in the warm and opulent luxury of a large American iron will have to be on the alert - he could very easily be bested by a brother member shivering and bouncing along in a smaller and more potent tho' possibly less comfortable machine."

The following is probably a press release regarding the running of the 1949 Michigan "Press On Regardless". Unfortunately, there is no author named, so I cannot give credit where it is due.

"At 10:30 A.M. Saturday, October 22nd, in beautiful crisp Autumn weather, the first car got underway from the starting point at the Dearborn Inn in the first running of the Michigan "Press On Regardless", a tortuous route over secondary roads and country lanes; consisting of three legs and nine unknown and unexpected check points. Others followed at one minute intervals, until the entire field was away on the first leg of the run, a "time and directions" trial to Battle Creek, 150 miles away. At a drivers' meeting held prior to the start, contestants were briefed by the officials for the run who explained the workings of a time and directions trial, and by an officer of the Michigan State Police who outlined Michigan Highway regulations for the benefit of those who were unfamiliar with them.

"Five hours later, the first leg finished at member A. C. Baker's Dodge-Plymouth agency in Battle Creek, the contestants having attempted to follow printed directions given them at the start while maintaining an average speed assigned by displacement classes. They were stopped at three intermediate unannounced check points en route to record their time and

to assure that they were following the prescribed route. Their arrival time was recorded at the finish, one penalty point being scored against them for each minute ahead or behind schedule at the check points and at the finish of the leg. This scoring method was applied to the other two legs of the run, and the total penalty points earned over the entire course was subtracted from 1,000 to determine the final point standing.

"After inspecting Al Baker's very interesting collection of sports, vintage and antique cars, the contestants proceeded to Bob Holmes' Buick agency in Battle Creek, where the cars were locked up. The drivers and crews then repaired to the Hart Hotel, where they were the guests of Messrs Baker and Holmes at cocktails preceding dinner.

"The second leg, a night run with a map in lieu of the printed directions of the first leg, got under way from Baker's at 8:30 P.M. following dinner. The destination this time was Flint; the distance 110 miles. On this leg biting cold and heavy traffic were additional hazards, especially for those in open cars not equipped with tops. At the finish in Flint, the cars were locked up for the night in the Buick agency through the courtesy of member Charles Chayne, the contestants retiring, a tired, cold but happy group, to the Durant Hotel for some much needed sleep.

"Leg three, a time and directions trial similar to the first, started at 10 o'clock Sunday morning. This time the destination was the original starting point in Dearborn, the distance 100 miles. Sunday traffic, obscure back roads, heavy rain that had fallen during the night and the usual three check points all went to make this portion of the trial a tough one on cars and crews. All arrived safely however, and

following a good clean up and brief respite, all hands sat for a late Sunday afternoon dinner. Final scores were announced, prizes awarded and everyone participating agreed that the whole affair had been very worth while and that they had enjoyed themselves thoroughly.

"There were many humorous and exciting incidents, too numerous to relate here, also some not so humorous such as several flat tires. Many contestants became lost, missed turns in the route, found it necessary to "de-ditch" and of course caused no little bit of excitement in the rural areas, especially when tearing up and down some country lane looking for an inconspicuous but definitely existent landmark. Next year's "Press On Regardless" will be run over a new course and it is hoped that those who didn't compete this year will be on hand for the 1950 running of the event."

Among the 37 cars participating there were 5 MG "TC"s, 1 MG "M", 1 BMW 327, 2 Citroens, 1 Fiat-Parago, 1 Alfa Romeo, 1 Austin A 40, 1 Volkswagen, 1 Cord, 1 Studebaker, 1 Deussenberg, 1 Riley Roadster, 1 Jaguar SS 100, 1 Miller-Ford, 1 Ford convertible coupe, 1 Ford Tudor, 2 Olds "88"s, 1 LaSalle sedan.

The first 3 places in Sports Car Class went to V. E. Gardner from South Bend in a '49 Studebaker Special 2-seater with 903 points, R. D. Maurer from Detroit in a '30 MG "M" 2-seater with 892 points, and L. G. Gray from Detroit in a '48 MG "TC" 2-seater with 884 points.

The first 3 places in Touring Class went to L. Turco from Detroit in a '49 Ford convertible coupe with 891 points, M. D. Burrell from Detroit in a '37 LaSalle sedan with 890 points, and W. Sturgeon from Detroit in a '47 Volkswagen with 882 points.

MICHIGAN  
*PRESS  
 ON  
 REGARDLESS*  
 OF SPORTS CAR CLUB  
 OF AMERICA

1949

*The original POR dash plaque -  
 designed by Charles Davison*



*Getting ready for the start at Greenfield Village*

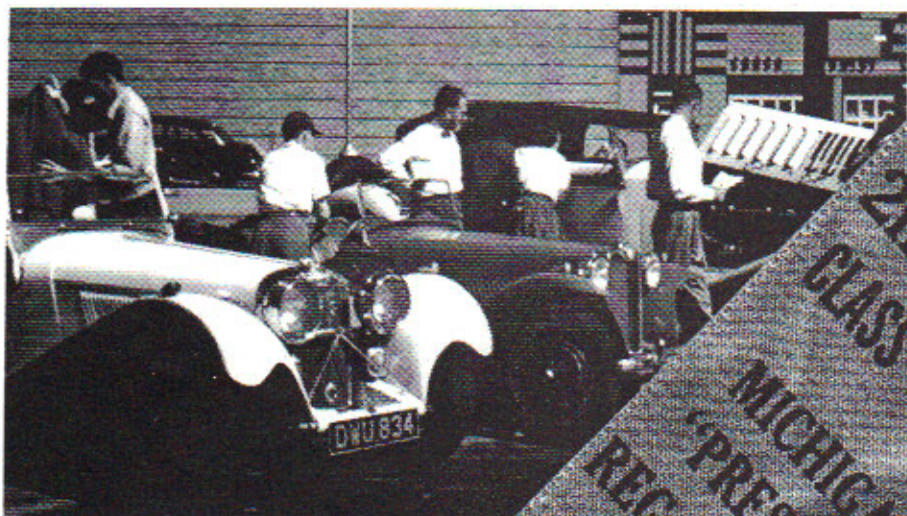


*Charles Davison  
 and Vic Mancini  
 at Greenfield Village*

*Bill Sands under his  
 M.G. T.C., Bill Wood's  
 red T.C., and Harold Lance's  
 Austin A 40*



*Bob Collins, George Gaston,  
and Bob Temple*



*Cars lined up .....*



*..... in Flint, Michigan*

*DOR  
pictorial by  
Suzanne Royce  
from memorabilia  
supplied by  
Mark Davison*

